

Sherwood Ranch  
Near Salinas, Monterey County, California

HABS NO. CA 1121

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
District No. 38

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Irving F. Morrow, District Officer  
1605 DeYoung Building, San Francisco, Cal.

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT  
HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

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SHERWOOD RANCH

Salinas, Monterey County, California

ADDRESS 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  miles Northeast of Salinas, California  
OWNER Property last owned by Stansfield Sherwood  
OCCUPANT Building Demolished

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Sherwood Ranch, previously known as the Rancho Sausal, was built between 1824 and 1870 and was one of the most important land holdings during the development of what is now Monterey County, then the adjacent area to Monterey, the Mexican Capitol of Alta, California. The buildings existed in 1937 when measurements were made.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Physical History The north section of the City of Salinas California is bordered by the Natividad and Gablian Creeks and covers a portion of the original Rancho Sausal. Land in this area was first used as public potrero (cattle ranges) with no definite personal ownership. Names of sub-divisions were often given by the various missions who established mission ranchos that later became private grants. By the 1820's and 1830's, retired Mexican soldiers sought personal land grants. Simple huts at first sheltered the Vacqueros; the elaborate Adobe Houses came later. The boundary lines dividing these potreros were not accurate, and as a result, definite records of these land divisions are slightly confused.

The earliest record of ownership of the Rancho Sausal is Feliciano and Mariano Sobranes who occupied the land in 1823. They were granted the Rancho El Alisal in 1834, the eastern adjacent property, by Governor Jose Figueroa.<sup>1</sup> In 1828, Rancho Sausal was used along with El Alisal and Canada de Natividad by Manual Butron and Nicholas Alviso as a potrero.<sup>2</sup> From 1830 to 1836, Martin Olivera and his family were tenants at the rancho.<sup>3</sup>

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Jose Tiburico Castro, when ad-interim Governor in 1829, received a grant of Rancho Sausal in August 2, 1834, from Governor Jose Figueroa. Although the grant was made to Castro in 1834, he seems to have resided there much earlier. His house, the central adobe, is said to have been begun about 1824 by Soberanes and completed by him with the assistance of Jose T. Castro about 1830.

Jose Antonio Castro, Miguel Castro and a family of fifteen persons arrived in the vicinity in 1836 and occupied the rancho. At one time it was partially used by W.E.P. Hartnell, the founder of Hartnell College near Salinas.<sup>4</sup> On August 10, 1845, Governor Pio Pico regranted Sausal to Castro.

Jacob Primer Leese, who came from Ohio in 1833 or 1834, filed claim to the Rancho Sausal on February 5, 1853, and received a patent to the property covered under the two grants by Figueroa and Pio Pico of 10,241 acres from the United States Government on March 4, 1858.<sup>5</sup>

Jacob P. Leese transferred the property in 1860 to Eugene Sherwood, who was a Captain in the British Army, and a Veteran of the Crimean War. Sherwood was born in London, England in 1828. He was a graduate of Eton College and Temple Court in London. Shortly after his admission to the Bar of England, he received his commission in the Army.

While still in London, he "became associated with a number of capitalists in the formation of a company for the purpose of embarking in the sheep business in California".<sup>6</sup> He was the American representative and manager of the company and landed in San Francisco, California in 1856 in search of suitable tracts for the pasturage of sheep. He purchased Rancho San Lorenzo in Alameda County in 1859, and then traveled south, where in 1860, he purchased Rancho Sausal, stocked the lands with 3,000 head of sheep, and thus is considered a pioneer in the sheep industry of California.

The flood of 1862 at Rancho San Lorenzo and the drought years which followed in 1863 and 1864 put him out of business, and in 1869 he sold the San Lorenzo ranch and made his home at Rancho El Sausal.

Sherwood converted this land into farms and raised wheat. He leased all but two thousand acres of the original 10,000 acre ranch and became an active leader in the development of the now prosperous agricultural area in, and around Salinas. He was one of the original promoters of the City of Salinas in 1869, and donated land for churches, highways, and 60 acres known as Sherwood Park in Salinas "with the understanding that fairs should be held on the grounds at least every alternate year".<sup>7</sup>

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His wife, Rhoda J. Upsher and her three children, Eugene, Stanley, and Jessie arrived in 1860. Other children, Stansfield and Clarence were born in California.

Captain Sherwood sent all his children from the ranch to San Francisco to complete their educations. He retired from actual business in 1883 and moved to Alameda California for the rest of his life.

After his father's retirement, Stansfield Sherwood took charge of the landed interests and helped develop the land, and the development of the City of Salinas. The rancho was still intact in 1933 when Hero and Ethel Rensch, noted California Historians, visited Stansfield Sherwood at "Willowvale Farm", and described the "rare and beautiful combination of California Colonial and early American Country House which is located one mile east of the County Hospital on the Salinas - Natividad Road. The adobe and frame houses in this unique ensemble were in an excellent state of preservation, a memorial to the Arcadian years of Rancho Sausal and its owners and occupants from Soberanes and Castro to Leese and Sherwood.

"The old adobe and the later frame houses of Rancho Sausal were built in line with the adobe walls of a large court yard after the early California manner. A draw gate, with its high-pitched gable roof, gave entrance to the yard on the north. Through a small iron-barred porthole we had a glimpse of old-fashioned flowers, a vivid splash of red geraniums and yellow snap dragons against the plastered walls." 8

The Castro Adobe (1824-1830) (Central Adobe) was the main feature of the quadrangle forming the walls of the court yard patio on the east side and the stable yard on the west side. The porch or corridor faced the patio. The roof was of poles bound together by rawhide thongs and plastered with mud and tiles. There was an attic over the large first floor rooms as well as open fireplaces in two of the lower rooms. There were wooden shutters at the windows reinforced by iron bars, typical of the Spanish and Mexican houses of Alta, California. The Northeast and Northwest adobe buildings and adobe walls enclosing the quadrangle were completed by Jose T. Castro and members of his family, with the aid of Indians and other unskilled artisans from about 1830 to 1845.

The two story frame house that forms the eastern part of the quadrangle as well as the north gate house, certain barns, and additions to adobes were built by Jacob P. Leese from 1852-1860.

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They were "from hardwood lumber cut in Maine and shipped around the Horn. They were portable houses bought by Leese in Yerba Buena and taken down to his Rancho Sausal, where he had them assembled in the plain farmhouse style common to such 'resawed siding' country houses of pioneer California."<sup>9</sup> An unusual feature of the two story frame house is the pointed arched window in the west elevation. The one story frame dining room and kitchen additions to the two story frame building; the barns, fences, gates, and improvements to the adobes were completed by Eugene Sherwood from 1860 to 1870.

The material for the adobe brick of the central adobe, northwest adobe, and the servant's adobe, as well as the handmade roof tiles were obtained from a clay and sand pit located on Gabilan Creek.

The framing timber and some of the trim for the adobe buildings was redwood and obtained by a man known as "Scotch" or "Whipsaw" Whalley at a point near Watsonville about 35 miles from Rancho Sausal.

The material was transported over the crude roads and trails on carretas (crude two wheeled carts) drawn by oxen. Of particular interest was the roof construction with peeled willow logs for rafters surmounted with a mat of small willow branches and clay under the roof tiling, the whole being bound together with rawhide thongs. Window sash and glass were probably added at a later date by Leese. He built the large north gate with the arched shelter. This was built high to form a landmark to be seen from a distance. It was called the Sherman Gate by some, as General William T. Sherman, then a subaltern in the First United States Dragoons then stationed at Monterey, visited the Sherwood Ranch. Sherwood was very hospitable and the large one story dining room was devoted largely to entertainment of visitors. "It contained a large dining table of simple design with benches to match, also a harpsichord brought from France around the Cape Horn and said to have been the first one in California."<sup>10</sup>

#### HISTORICAL INTEREST

The Sherwood Ranch (Rancho Sausal) had a significant record in the events pertaining to California history. It was an important ranch in the development of Monterey County during the Mexican-American transition and also in establishing the area as one of the most important agricultural belts in the state.

The venerable adobe home of the Mexican days and the old frame houses of pioneer American California gave one a sense of the mingling of cultures: The Sobranes and Castros with their Spanish and Mexican traditions blended, yet distinct, from the American and English heritage brought West by Jacob Leese and Eugene Sherwood.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

Central Adobe - Exterior This adobe was approximately 63' long and 19'-6" wide with a shed attached to the west side and an open porch (corredor) on the east side. The walls were of adobe brick averaging 3-1/2" x 11" x 2" in size and had foundations of field stone. All the exterior walls were adobe brick, plastered with adobe plaster and painted or whitewashed.

The main roof was of 6" x 9" x 20" handmade burnt clay tiles (Mission type) laid over a 3" mat formed of 1-1/4" + 1-1/2" diameter willow branches laid close and lashed together and to the log rafters with rawhide thongs, probably applied when green or wet to allow them to shrink and form a firm construction. Over this was applied a mixture of clay and sand reinforced with the hair of cattle and into which the tiles were originally laid. It is to be noted that shingles provided a protective part of the roofing system.

The shed on the west side of the adobe was a later addition by Sherwood and was of sawn redwood framing with a split shake roof.

The exterior porch (corredor) floor was pise' de terre (rammed earth). The tile roof section above the porch was supported by nine, irregularly spaced redwood and pine columns.

There were two door openings on the west side with redwood and pine floor frames and doors added either by Leese or Sherwood. There were four window openings in the central adobe with redwood and pine framing and trim. Wooden shutters were on the openings and the window openings were protected by iron bars.

Interior The Central adobe had three rooms with an attic above. There were open fireplaces in the north and center rooms. The walls were adobe plaster over adobe brick, and the floors were of sawn pine planks. The fireplaces and flues were of adobe and burnt brick. The attic joists and timbers were whipsawed and hewn redwood and the attic floor of sawn redwood planks of random widths. The roof rafters

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were willow logs tapering  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " to 7" in diameter on 2'-6" centers, and bound together at intersections with rawhide thongs, except overhangs at the ends which were of sawn redwood. The posts, girders, and other framing timbers were sawn redwood.

Northeast Corner Adobe - Exterior The northeast corner adobe was 30'-1" long and 14'-0" wide. The walls were of adobe brick averaging  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " x 11" x 2" in size and had foundations of rough stone. All the exterior walls were exposed adobe brick, painted or white-washed.

The roof was split shakes laid over 1" x 12" boards over 3" x  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " redwood framing timber. There were two window openings in the east wall with redwood easement shutters and pine framing and trim. There was a continuous redwood lintel and sill framing over both openings. There was one door opening on the west wall with redwood and pine framing and trim.

Interior The northeast corner adobe was composed of one room with exposed roof framing. There was a fireplace in the north wall. The floor was 1" x 6" - 1" x 12" random plank redwood laid on pise' de terre. The walls were adobe plaster over adobe brick.

North Gateway - Exterior The gateway is 10'-0" wide and 18'-0" deep, with the additional rooms on the east and west side formed the north end of the quadrangle.

The north exterior walls of the additional rooms were adobe brick averaging  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " x 11" x 12" in size and had rough stone foundations. The south exterior walls of the additional rooms were horizontal redwood planking which were painted or whitewashed.

The gateway, with its pitched shake roof and arched opening, was redwood and pine framing timber and redwood board and batten sheathing.

Interior The additional rooms (north) were composed of three partially enclosed rooms west of the gateway and two enclosed rooms on the east side of the gate. There was a crude open pit fireplace in the first room east of the gateway portal. The walls were of exposed adobe brick and exposed framing with the exterior sheathing. The framing timbers in the roof were exposed and the floors were pise de terre.

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Frame House, Dining Hall, Servant's Adobe - Exterior The two story frame house was 44'-4" long and 27'-2" wide with a dining room, servant's adobe, shed and pergola attached.

The millwork, horizontal siding, window and door frames, doors, sash and general trim throughout the exterior and interior of the frame house were of eastern red spruce. The trim and horizontal siding of the one story addition (dining room) was redwood. (Note the quoin treatment on the east elevation corners of the dining room). The foundations were generally redwood planks and rubble field stone.

The roofs of the frame houses were sawn redwood shingles. The east elevation of the two story frame house was organized about an open porch on both stories. The porch had two wood columns, wood and iron rod balustrades, wood plank floors and was accessible to major rooms through four, two pair four-light french doors and four, four-panel wood doors. The three windows were twelve-light double hung. The north elevation had one twelve-light, double hung window on the second floor. The west elevation had eight twelve-light, double hung windows and one pointed arch window which was on the second floor. The main entrance had a three-panel (wood) one-panel (glass) door with a simple bracket supported cover above.

The east elevation of the large dining hall had a projecting bay window with one, nine-light fixed window and two, three-light fixed windows. The bay window was capped by a moulded cornice.

The servant's adobe, 34'-6" long and 11'-11" wide, was attached to, and was a part of the south wall of the dining room. It was composed of two rooms and had both adobe and frame walls. The adobe section had two, twelve-light double hung windows in the east elevation. The roof was redwood shingles.

Interior The interior of the frame house was composed of two main rooms with surrounding chambers, the living room on the first floor and the sitting room on the second floor. The floors, walls, and ceiling of the living room were 1" x 13" boards, paper over burlap on boards and exposed timber beams with paper over boards in between. The large brick fireplace on the south end had a random tile hearth and redwood trim and mantle.

The floors, walls, and ceiling of the sitting room was 1" x 13" boards, paper over burlap on boards, and paper over boards. The fireplace in the sitting room had a brick hearth with iron guard, redwood brackets supporting wood mantle and a more elaborate wood trim.



This room had a moulded wood cornice at the break line of the coved ceiling. In the dining hall there were 1" x 6" tongue and groove wood floors; walls with a wood paneled wainscot and plaster above; and a plastered cove ceiling. The brick fireplace had a random tile hearth, wood trim, and a wood mantle supported by wood brackets.

The servant's adobe, composed of a kitchen and dining room, had wood plank floors, paper over wood and adobe plaster papered walls, and paper over wood ceilings.

South Barn - Exterior The south barn was 66'-5" long and 12'-2" wide and formed the south enclosure of the quadrangle. The framing timber and horizontal sheathing was redwood and pine. The irregularly spaced wood columns supported the wood rafters of the shed roof of sawn shakes.

West Barn - Exterior The west barn, forming the western enclosure of the quadrangle, was 131'-7" long and 12'-2" wide. The west wall was of adobe brick and the east wall was 1" x 12" horizontal wood siding on 6" x 6" wood columns. The shed roof was sawn shakes. The northern end wall was adobe with a cap of sawn shakes.

Site The building complex was oriented with the main gateway on the north wall of the quadrangle. This resulted from the north-south orientation of the Central Adobe which allowed the central area within the walls to be separated into the stable yard and patio area.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Bancroft, H.H. History of California, Vol. ii, 726, 752-3.
- 2 Ibid, ii, 616, 664
- 3 Ibid, iii, 679; IV, 758.
- 4 Hittell, Theodore, History of California, Vol. I, p 616.
- 5 Hoffman, Ogden, Reports of Land Cases determined in the United States District Court for the Northern district of California. June Term, 1853 to June term, 1858, inclusive...V.I, San Francisco, Numa Herbert Publisher 1862. Table of Land Claims, Appendix, p.76.
- 6 Gwinn, J.M., History and Biographical Record of Monterey & San Benito Counties ... Vol. II, Historic Record Co., Los Angeles, 1910, pp 506-508.
- 7 Ibid.

- 8 Rensch, Hero and Ethel, Field Notes, July 3, 1933.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Parker, Paul P., Conversations with ... Information Agent Farm Credit Association, Salinas, California

Supplemental Material

Hoover, Mildred B. and Rensch, Ethel G. and Hero, E., Historic Spots in California, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1958. c. 1948.

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Research work by Mr. Charles Ward, HABS, 1937.

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